

April 22–May 23, 1982

Curators' Gallery, Plaza Level, Ahmanson Gallery

Los
Angeles
County
Museum
of
Art



n Exhibitions:

oorary Arts Museum, Houston

December, Düsseldorf

one Gallery, New York

einberg Gallery, San Francisco

one Gallery, New York

ischofberger, Zurich

offman Gallery, Chicago

one Gallery, New York

elli Gallery, New York

Museum, Amsterdam

leavin Gallery, Los Angeles

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1. Starting to Sing: Untitled (1), 1981
Oil and Rustoleum on unstretched canvas tarpaulin
15 x 18 ft.
Collection of Doris and Charles Saatchi, London



2. Starting to Sing: Untitled (2), 1981
Oil and Rustoleum on unstretched canvas tarpaulin
13 ft. 10 in. x 19 ft.
Collection of Doris and Charles Saatchi, London



3. Starting to Sing: Artaud, 1981
Oil and Rustoleum on unstretched canvas tarpaulin
14 x 13 ft.
Collection of Doris and Charles Saatchi, London



4. Starting to Sing: Florence Loeb, 1981
Oil and Rustoleum on unstretched canvas tarpaulin
13 ft. x 9 ft. 4 in.
Collection of Doris and Charles Saatchi, London

Julian Schnabel was born in New York City in 1951. He received his B.F.A. from the University of Houston, Texas, in 1972. In 1973-74, he participated in the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program, New York. Schnabel lives and works in New York.

GALLERY SIX, JULIAN SCHNABEL, is the ninth in an ongoing series of retrospective exhibitions (powered by the Department of Twentieth-Century Art)

In 1979 Julian Schnabel created a sensation with his exhibition, at the Mary Boone Gallery in New York, of "broken-plate paintings"—large-scale works of images painted in vivid colors on a surface of plaster and broken pottery. Since then, Schnabel has continued to startle the art world with his large, confident, audacious, figurative paintings on velvet with colors that shimmer and glow.

It has been many years since the work of a young American artist has aroused the excitement, acclaim, and debate that has been accorded the paintings of Julian Schnabel. This extraordinary notice follows a period in which art critics found few painters to champion. During the 70s doubts had been raised about the direction of painting and its questionable efflorescence. Considering that climate, the widespread attention Schnabel has attracted in a relatively short period of time is especially provocative. His meteoric rise has been marked by dozens of articles about him in leading periodicals, participation in prestigious international exhibitions, sold-out shows at top New York galleries, acquisition of his works by major museums and private collectors, a recent exhibition at Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum, and a string of artists working in modes related to his own.

Schnabel's images are derived from a variety of sources: magazine illustrations, art book reproductions, literature, theater, and his own memory. A thread of art historical allusion runs throughout his work. His paintings incorporate unconventional materials, used for their intrinsic textures and colors. Exuberance, confusion, and unbridled energy spill across the surfaces of his paintings with an intensity reminiscent of the paintings of the Abstract Expressionists of the 1940s and 1950s.

Starting to Sing (1981), a four-part painting, is the result of Schnabel's recent experimentation with new surfaces. He was working at his beach house in Amagansett, Long Island, on a group of massive plate paintings. Schnabel purchased some tarpaulins to protect them, and became intrigued with the possibilities that these surfaces offered. He spread the tarps on the beach and, using three-foot brushes, painted them with Rustoleum and oil paint. Until he hung the panels on the wall, Schnabel was unable to see the completed work; he found this aspect of the large scale most compelling.

The painting relies for most of its imagery on works by Gustav Courbet and Antonin Artaud. For the first panel, Schnabel selected a detail of a reproduction of Courbet's *L'Atelier (The Studio)*, and translated the small illustration of Courbet's large

painting into a larger-than-life-size drawing/painting. For the second panel, he held small Puerto Rican ceramic figures (*santos*) in one hand and interpreted them on a fourteen-by-nineteen-foot tarp. The last two panels, and the most sketchy, are influenced by eerie, lifelike drawings by Artaud, originator of the Theater of Cruelty. Schnabel is particularly drawn to the philosophies of Artaud, and was inspired by Artaud's self-portrait and drawing of a woman, Florence Loeb. Unlike Schnabel's other work, in which images are superimposed on top of velvet and broken plates or painted under objects fixed to heavily worked surfaces, these images stand out dramatically from a barren ground. By contrast, and perhaps as a relief, the clutter and density of the plate and velvet paintings are absent. The result is a distillation of emotion—imparted through four images which, in their massive scale, surround the viewer.

The phenomenon of Julian Schnabel will continue to be debated. Under scrutiny and a barrage of critical acclaim, Schnabel challenges himself and the art world with his daring work. His paintings demand consideration by the contemporary art audience.

Stephanie Barron
Curator of Twentieth-Century Art

One-Man Exhibitions:

1976

Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston

1978

Galerie December, Düsseldorf

1979

Mary Boone Gallery, New York

Daniel Weinberg Gallery, San Francisco

Mary Boone Gallery, New York

1980

Galerie Bischofberger, Zurich

Young-Hoffman Gallery, Chicago

1981

Mary Boone Gallery, New York

Leo Castelli Gallery, New York

1982

Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles

Selected Group Exhibitions:

1971

Hidden Houston, University of Saint Thomas,
Houston

1974

W.I.S.P. Exhibition, Whitney Museum of
American Art, New York

1977

Surrogate/Self Portraits, Holly Solomon
Gallery, New York

1979

Visionary Images, Renaissance Society,

University of Chicago

Four Artists, Hallwalls Gallery, Buffalo

1980

Nuova Immagine, Milan

L'Amérique aux Indépendants, Grand Palais,
Paris

Drawings, Mary Boone Gallery, New York
New Work/New York, Yarlow/Salzman

Gallery, Toronto

39th Venice Biennale, American Pavilion,
Venice, Italy

On Paper, Institute of Contemporary Art,
Richmond

Painting and Sculpture Today, Indianapolis
Museum of Art, Indianapolis

1981

A New Spirit in Painting, Royal Academy,
London

1981 Biennial Exhibition, Whitney Museum of
American Art, New York

Westkunst, Cologne

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